

CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

# From under the Dome

SENATOR KEVIN MURRAY, CHAIR

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## Budget passed for 2005/06

On July 5, the Senate passed a state budget that is, at best, tolerable to both political parties. Once again, the budget deadline was missed because of the two-thirds majority needed to pass a budget in California. Needlessly, Republicans blocked a timely passage for three weeks past the June 15 deadline, without producing any meaningful changes.

The differences between this final budget agreement and the budget Democrats voted to approve in mid-June were insignificant. The issues could have been easily resolved, had Republicans been willing to negotiate. On June 15, as the *Los Angeles Times*



Senator Wes Chesbro presents the budget

noted, 62.5 percent of the Senate and 58.8 percent of the Assembly voted to support the budget before them. In most states – where a budget is passed by a simple majority vote – that would have provided an ample margin for passage.

What eventually emerged, through compromise and negotiations, was a budget that basically

reflected the governor's values – with some modifications.

This budget does avoid taxes, speeds up repayment of the debt the state owes local government, and it avoids new state borrowing. Even so, it makes unwise cuts in health and human services programs that go beyond what Democrats would have liked. At the earliest opportunity, we are determined to restore funding to many of these programs, especially the Governor's suspension of the cost-of-living adjustments for the working poor and the aged, blind and disabled.

The non-partisan Legislative

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## Celebrating core values of Californians

By Senator Richard Alarcón

*Below is Sen. Alarcón's 4<sup>th</sup> of July commentary describing the Senate Democrats' continuing commitment to the core values of Californians.*

We Californians prize the sense that this state – though sophisticated and richly complex – is still America's frontier. We love innovation and challenge. We love to live on the cutting edge. There's nothing that seems too tough for us, too daunting, too difficult to conquer.

And so, we who serve in the

Legislature, ought to take time to examine why the people sent us here and what their vision is for the state.

We have listened to the people in town hall and community meetings across the state as they spoke of these fundamental issues, saying what is most important to them is to make our schools and transportation systems right again, to make health care affordable, to protect the environment and to find long term equitable means of expanding the economy and

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# Elder financial abuse could end with a phone call

*Below is the transcript of a radio address delivered by Senator Joe Simitian.*

Each year, more than 200,000 Californians are victims of elder abuse. And cases of elder financial abuse are growing at a particularly alarming rate.

What makes the crime of elder financial abuse especially tragic is that the very people we would hope would be there to protect their elders are often the ones deceiving and fleecing them. Frequently, they are family members, caregivers, and financial professionals.

They are too often the very people who seniors put their trust in because they can't manage on their own.

But what if a simple phone call could help save an elderly person from losing his or her life savings?

It can, and I want to make sure

that making that phone call is a requirement, not just a passing thought.

My Senate Bill 1018 requires bank, savings and loan, and credit union employees to immediately notify Adult Protective Services, which investigates reports of elder abuse, or a law enforcement official if they suspect that an elderly or dependent adult is a victim of fraud or financial abuse.

And I'm pleased to report that both the California State Senate and Assembly have approved this important new protection for seniors. The bill will return to the Senate for a vote on the Assembly amendments, and then to the Governor for what we hope will be final approval.

For too long, California has had a "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" policy regarding elder

financial abuse. Bank employees are in the best position to observe and report this abuse as soon as it happens. SB 1018 simply requires that they act on their suspicions.

They won't have to investigate the crime. They won't have to chase the perpetrators. They won't have to try to recover the funds. They simply need to make a phone call.

California has the largest older adult population in the nation—3.5 million people over the age of 65. As California's elder population grows, so too will financial abuse.

We need to stop this abuse. Making a call to Adult Protective Services is an easy and small gesture that can protect the savings of a lifetime. Let's hope that SB 1018 soon becomes law.

## The Senate Democratic Caucus

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## Budget

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Analyst's Office (LAO) notes that about half of the budget solution comes from holding Proposition 98 school funding at the level anticipated in last year's budget package. This shortchanges our schools by \$3 billion, and breaks the solemn promise the governor made to restore this money quickly after suspending Prop. 98 in the 2004-2005 budget.

Still, as the LAO points out, even if all of the savings in the budget plan are fully realized, expenditures will still exceed projected revenues by around \$6.1 billion in 2006-07. Democrats seek a fair balance between spending and revenues, and

an end to the continuing structural deficit. But the only long-term solution the governor offered during budget deliberations was the demand – which he soon dropped – to tie a budget deal to a spending cap. This is nearly identical to the measure he has placed on the November ballot. Senate Democrats made it clear to this Governor that an administration spending cap represents a significant and unacceptable shift in recognized constitutional budget authority. The LAO says the Governor's proposal: "...would put more spending on autopilot and make it more difficult to balance future budgets in a rational way. The changes would also result in a diminution of legislative authority." We call it a power grab.

## Values

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balancing the state budget.

We are convinced that there are workable, cooperative, bipartisan ways to achieve these

goals. Dig down and you will find cooperation aplenty on those things that are truly important to us. We have enacted the most far-reaching effort of any state against global warming, and one of the

world's most ambitious strategies to explore the promise of stem cells. We have world-renowned renewable energy programs. We are among the leading states in the protection of privacy and personal liberties and civil rights. So what should we promise ourselves on this Independence Day 2005?

First we should promise to restore California's educational system, a system once the envy of the nation, one that had played a central role in making California the world's fifth largest economy.

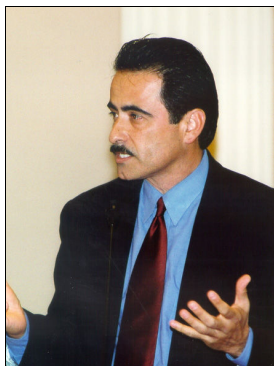
The Rand Corporation reports that California's public schools lag behind the nation in virtually

every key measurement including funding level, pupil achievement, class size, teacher qualifications, and facilities. How can we meet world-class academic standards with inadequate funding?

We also must fight to improve health care and to cover the one-fifth of Californians who lack health insurance, and find ways to keep our community hospitals open, and to make affordable prescription drugs and health insurance available to all.

The people are also tired of traffic congestion and highway and mass transportation systems that keep getting worse. We believe that transportation funds must be spent in the way the people intended and that Californians must have affordable housing, close to jobs and transit.

So, just as every Californian is a stakeholder in California, our system will work best when we allow all of the people to have a say, and when the people are able to trust their elected representatives to make the best decisions for their constituents.



Senator Alarcon

## Bill will expose cosmetic danger

Senator Carole Migden has introduced SB 484, a measure that would require cosmetic manufacturers to identify ingredients in their products that are known to cause cancer or reproductive harm. At present, manufacturers don't have to inform consumers about the carcinogens in their products because they are allowed to hide these chemicals behind vague phrases such as "fragrance" or "flavoring."

"We have never analyzed or required disclosure of ingredients that are known carcinogens in our personal care products," said Senator Migden. "The European Union has flat out banned these beauty products from the market because of their supposed danger. All this bill does is make important health information available to the public."

Cosmetics are any personal care product we put on our bodies that aren't soap. These include diaper creams, baby wipes, make-up, hair dye, shampoo, conditioner, nail polish, perfume, deodorant, toothpaste, and on and on. SB 484 says that California consumers ought to know what's in the multitude of cosmetic products they use every day. In fact, Californians use from 15 to 25 of these products daily, exposing themselves to chemical ingredients without knowing the long-term health risks.

The legislation is not a ban, but a call to accountability through disclosure. Currently, the Food and Drug Administration doesn't have the authority to test potentially dangerous chemicals before the personal care products reach store shelves. SB 484 would create a scientific process to determine if the chemicals in cosmetic products create a health risk to consumers.

Senator Migden added, "For decades our state and nation have analyzed the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat to alert us to the presence of harmful chemicals and other types of pollution. If we inspect hamburger meat for harmful carcinogens, why not include cosmetics?"

SB 484 is the first bill of its kind in the nation that will reach the executive branch. Senator Migden expects the measure to arrive on Governor Schwarzenegger's desk by early September.

# A closer look at Senate District 3

Senate District 3, represented by Senator Carole Migden, is located along the northern coast of California and includes the eastern half of the City and County of San Francisco, all of Marin County, and portions of Sonoma County including and surrounding the communities of Petaluma and Rohnert Park. The largest populated area in the district is by far San Francisco where 429,037 people fall into District 3, while the least populated city in the district is Tomales (Marin County) home to just 210 residents. The district is also known for many tourist attractions.

Located just north of San Francisco, Marin County is linked to the City by the Golden Gate Bridge and to the East Bay by the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. Sonoma County borders Marin in the north and northeast and the Pacific Ocean on the west. The



combination of mountains, sea, and climate in Marin County has made the county a recreation spot for the entire Bay Area. Marin County has many state, county, and city operated parks and recreational facilities including China Camp State Park, Mt. Tamalpais State

Park, Point Reyes National Seashore, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

From dining to sightseeing, San Francisco is home to many restaurants,



museums and parks. Main attractions include the famous Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, Chinatown, Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf and Golden Gate Park. Union Square is San Francisco's mecca for shopoholics. For art lovers, San Francisco offers a variety of museums with reproductions of French master museums at the San Francisco's Legion of Honor and the best of the world's contemporary art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. San Francisco is truly an artistic city. San Francisco is also home to a professional football team, the 49ers, and a professional baseball team, the Giants.

Just 35 miles north of San Francisco, Sonoma County is the original home of wine production in northern California and is still the state's largest producer of quality wine. Aside from the many wineries of Sonoma County, there is also beautiful scenery including old growth redwoods.



Sen. Carol Migden  
District 3

## Constituent Corner

In early April, the San Francisco District Office of Senator Carole Migden received a call from a constituent who needed help registering his daughter's birth and getting her birth certificate to obtain her passport. His son was scheduled to perform at a June music recital in Italy and he wanted his family, including his daughter, to witness this once-in-a-lifetime event.

The constituent had originally sent the paperwork in to Vital Records in Sacramento in December, but had yet to receive any documents.

Senator Migden's staff called Vital Records and there was no existing paperwork. Vital Records also informed Senator Migden's staff that because of the increase in fraudulent birth records additional supporting documentation was required along with a six month waiting period.

The birth record problem partially stemmed from the fact that the girl had been born at home. Unlike hospital

births where the doctors verify and sign the birth documents and the hospital sends in the registration, a home birth requires the parents to register the child's birth with Vital Records.

The Migden staff began working feverishly to collect the necessary paperwork including doctor visits, sealed school records, affidavits, and the marriage certificate so that the father's name could be placed on the certificate.

Finally on May 23, the constituent called to say that he received his daughter's birth certificate in the mail. The first major hurdle was overcome, but the senator's staff would not be satisfied until the constituent had his daughter's passport in his hand and assisted him to expedite the passport process.

The passport came in the mail exactly two days before the family left for Europe.